



Broadband Mapping Overview

December 2010

Alabama is engaged in a project to map the availability of broadband connections throughout the state and to make plans for enhanced broadband deployment and usage. An interactive mapping tool has been developed and placed online as part of this effort.

In November 2009, the Alabama Broadband Initiative (ALBI) received approximately \$1.8 million in grant funding from the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) through the "State Broadband Data and Development Grant Program (SBDD)". ALBI selected the LinkAMERICA Alliance as the primary contractor to oversee and implement many of the program's activities in the first two years. In September 2010 ALBI received an additional \$2.97 million in grant funding to complete years 3-5 of the program.

Mapping is an important first step in a state's broadband planning efforts. First and foremost, developing detailed service maps is a great way to organize and conduct a comprehensive inventory of service across the entire State with a spotlight on where there are unserved or underserved areas. This core information helps focus policymakers, community leaders, service providers and others on the central issue at hand: where is the existing digital divide and how can we best close it?

In compliance with requirements of the SBDD—and to ensure a realistic, informative view of Alabama's broadband inventory and service areas—the LinkAMERICA Alliance began identifying the State's providers of broadband service in 2008. Providers were identified through multiple sources, including:

- 1) State agencies
- 2) State association membership lists
- 3) National association lists
- 4) Third-party data sources
- 5) Web searches

Given the dynamic nature of competition in the telecommunications industry (including mergers, acquisitions, and the constant emergence of new providers), maintaining a current list of broadband providers is one of the most important and challenging aspects of the program. To date, approximately 75 broadband access providers have been contacted, and most are providing internet access at the minimum speeds required for SBDD participation (768 kilobits per second [kbps] download and 200 kbps upload speed). An initial Provider Workshop was held for all broadband providers identified through this process and the team has continued to help new providers join the program.

Consistent with NTIA's rules to ensure providers' proprietary business data is not compromised, non-disclosure agreements (NDAs) have been executed between the LinkAMERICA Alliance and the majority of known broadband providers. NDAs are not mandatory for data submission, and all data is protected regardless of the existence of an executed Agreement.